

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1 1. A method for providing information on a plurality of users to a plurality of
2 requestors over the Internet, comprising:
3 storing information on the plurality of users in a database and associating the information
4 with a plurality of keys;
5 receiving a request for information on a particular user from one of the requestors over
6 the Internet;
7 determining a key associated with the request, the key being stored as a cookie on a
8 machine of the particular user;
9 using the key associated with the request to retrieve the information on that particular
10 user from the database; and
11 forwarding the information on that particular user to the one requestor over the Internet.

1 2. The method as set forth in claim 1, wherein storing information comprises
2 associating a different key for information on each user.

1 3. The method as set forth in claim 1, wherein storing information comprises
2 storing multiple sets of information for at least some of the users with each set of information
3 being associated with a different key.

1 4. The method as set forth in claim 1, further comprising checking that the one
2 requestor is authorized to obtain the information on that particular user.

1 5. The method as set forth in claim 4, wherein checking comprises receiving from
2 the requestor a user-supplied password.

1 6. The method as set forth in claim 1, wherein forwarding comprises sending the
2 information in XML format.

1 7. The method as set forth in claim 1, further comprising receiving new
2 information on the user from the requestor and updating the database with the new
3 information.

1 8. The method as set forth in claim 1, further comprising selecting an available
2 key for a user and supplying the new key to a requestor so that the requestor can store the
3 new key as a cookie on a user's machine.

1 9. A method of obtaining information on users, comprising:
2 receiving over the Internet a request from a user's machine;
3 retrieving a cookie from the user's machine;
4 obtaining a key stored as part of the cookie;

5 sending a query over the Internet for data associated with that key, the query including
6 the key retrieved from the cookie; and
7 receiving the data associated with key, wherein the data includes information on the
8 user.

1 10. The method as set forth in claim 9, wherein receiving the data comprises
2 receiving the data in XML format.

1 11. The method as set forth in claim 9, further comprising receiving a password
2 from the user and sending the query includes sending the password.

1 12. The method as set forth in claim 9, further comprising using the data on the
2 user in responding to the user's request.

1 13. The method as set forth in claim 9, wherein retrieving the cookie comprises
2 retrieving a plurality of cookies from the user's machine.

1 14. The method as set forth in claim 1, further comprising receiving a request from
2 a second user's machine, checking for a cookie on the second user's machine, sending a
3 query for an available key when the second user's machine does not contain any cookie, and
4 placing the cookie with the available key on the second user's machine.

1 15. The method as set forth in claim 9, further comprising obtaining new
2 information on the user and sending the new information and the key over the Internet.

1 16. A system for storing information on a plurality of users and for providing the
2 information to a plurality of requestors, comprising:

3 a database for storing information on the plurality of users and for associating the
4 information with a plurality of keys;

5 a web server for receiving a request over the Internet from one of the requestors for
6 information on a particular user, the request including a key stored as part of a cookie on a
7 user's machine;

8 a retrieval unit for receiving the key and for retrieving the information associated with
9 that key;

10 wherein web server obtains the information from the retrieval unit and forwards the
11 information on the particular user to the requestor.

1 17. The system as set forth in claim 16, further comprising a key assignor for
2 assigning available keys to new users in the database.

1 18. The system as set forth in claim 16, further comprising an update unit for
2 storing new information on users in the database.

1 19. The system as set forth in claim 16, further comprising a verifier for verifying
2 that the requestor is authorized to receive the information on the particular user.

1 20. The system as set forth in claim 16, wherein the web server forward the
2 information on the particular user to the requestor in XML format.